

COUNTRY MUSIC

Reprinted August 6, 2009 (first published February 28, 1997) (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org) -

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This is an appropriate time to comment on a disturbing tendency in some Christian circles. Rock music is frequently rejected by Christian adults in what would be considered good churches. However, there is another sound which is welcomed in many of those same churches. The country sound, considered to be harmless and mild by adults who cannot bear that "noise," has gained in popularity and acceptance as an appropriate vehicle to sing praises unto the Lord.

THE THEME

Country music is contemporary music which is designed to entertain, satisfy, and please the world. An entire city exists on this industry. Nashville has become synonymous with country music. The discussion of the previous lessons has focused on the proven fact that all music, by its very nature, preaches a message. What is the message of country music? The titles of the songs give a reasonably accurate indication of the theme of the music:

"Loving Up a Storm"
"You'd Make an Angel Want to Cheat"
"That Lovin' You Feelin' Again"
"You Make Me Want to Be a Mother"
"Behind Closed Doors"
"Something to Brag About"
"She's Pullin' Me Back Again"
"Making Love from Memory"
"Let's Get It While the Gettin's Good"
"She's Not Really Cheatin,' She's Just Gettin' Even"
"Heavenly Bodies"
"Makin' Love Don't Always Make Love Grow"
"First Time Around"
"When I Get My Hands on You"
"I Feel Like Lovin' You Again"
"Why Don't You Spend the Night?"
"War Is Hell on the Home Front Too"
"I May Be Used, but Baby I Ain't Used Up"
"To All the Girls I've Loved Before"
"When We Make Love"
"Let's Stop Talkin' about It"

"I Dream of Women Like You"

"Just Give Me One More Night"

"Now I Lay Me Down to Cheat"

(Jacob Aranza, *More Rock Country & Backward Masking Unmasked*, Shreveport, La.: Huntington House, 1985, pp. 30-31).

The overwhelming theme of country music is triangle relationships. In addition, lost loves, broken homes, and the glorification of liquor frequently pervade the lyrics of the songs. IS THIS MUSIC WHOLESOME LISTENING FOR THE CHRISTIAN? IS IT WISE FOR THE CHILD OF GOD TO FILL HIS MIND WITH THESE THEMES? DOES THIS MUSIC BUILD THE CHRISTIAN IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE, OR DOES IT TEAR DOWN? DOES IT FOSTER CONTENTMENT OR DOES IT NOURISH RESTLESSNESS?

The Sounds of Social Change, written by two men who have studied the impact of this music, draws the following conclusion:

"There is a suggestive correspondence between the lyrical themes in country music and the life situation experienced by most of its fans. Taking the data already reported and framing a composite, country music fans are urban-living, white adults with rural roots who are established in home, family, and job, but are content with none of these. There is some evidence for the assertion that country music fans are discontented" (R. Serge Denisoff and Richard A. Peterson, *The Sounds of Social Change*, Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1972, p. 50).

Paul gave the Christian a worthy example to follow in Philippians 4:11: "for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Country music does not add to the believer's contentment. Furthermore, it is contributing to the gradual erosion of the moral fiber of individuals and families. A popular country music celebrity said:

"As a country artist, I'm not proud of a lot of things in my field. There is no doubt in my mind that we are contributing to the moral decline in America" (Jacob Aranza, *More Rock Country*, p. 29, quoted in F. Deford).

One of the most popular stars in country music appeared on "The Barbara Walters Special." During the ABC interview he explained how he gave up smoking cigarettes and smoked only "pot" before and during most performances until he suffered a collapsed lung. He made the following statements: "I am against authority; I am anti-establishment; I despise seeing a policeman" (Willie Nelson, "The Barbara Walters Special," ABC, June 15, 1982).

After this performer boasted of his life, which included three marriages and affairs during all three, Barbara Walters asked, "Do you realize the tremendous influence you have over the youth and adults of America.... does it not bother you that you could cause them to go in the same direction?" He responded, "They would do it anyway" (Ibid.).

The world recognizes the consequences of filling the mind with this kind of music while idolizing these performers. Why is it that Christians do not recognize it? Many bring this sound into their churches and pretend it is something which will please a holy and righteous God. Some would describe this kind of music as garbage. It is not garbage; it's poison. (Read Psalm 1.)

THE SOUND

The characteristics of the country sound have become very similar to those of rock. Since extensive time has been spent in discussing the rock sound, it will suffice to hear the remarks of an authority who concurs with this position. Schafer, author of *Rock Music*, writes:

"Many rock performers grew up with country and western music, and its characteristic forms and sounds are close to the ensemble sound of rock-instrumental combinations and techniques are closely parallel.... The division between country-and-western and urban pop has now blurred almost to vanishing" (William J. Schafer, *Rock Music*, Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972, p. 92).

Other secular authors go even further in showing the connection between rock and country music. Peter Wicke is head of the center for popular music research at the Music Faculty of Berlin's Humboldt University. In his penetrating, scholarly book, *Rock Music*, Dr. Wicke states that rock performers not only copy "Afro-American music with all its characteristic features," but that "the traditions of Afro-American music and country music" are "rock's musical roots." Anyone desiring to understand the culture, aesthetics and sociology of rock would do well to study this enlightening treatise by a German scholar (Peter Wicke, *Rock Music*, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 16, 48).

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